

Baltimore & Raleigh-Durham FMs Fight New Translators.

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The FCC's recent AM revitalization order has opened the door to scores of new FM translators and in a number of cases those new signals are causing headaches. Suburban stations in Baltimore and Raleigh-Durham have both launched campaigns hoping to enlist listeners in their fight to keep new translators from stepping on their signals.

Baltimore adult alternative WRNR-FM (103.1) owner Steve Kingston tells the Capital Gazette that a new co-channel 100-watt translator could impact as much as 30% of his suburban Annapolis-based station's listeners. The FCC has already granted a license for religious broadcaster Peter and John Radio Fellowship to build the translator in order to simulcast "Positive Talk 1230" WRBS. Kingston wasn't aware of the proposal earlier and he now tells the newspaper that he plans to file a petition for reconsideration with the FCC.

In the meantime, the station is enlisting listeners by creating on-air public service announcements and website ads encouraging listeners to fill out an online form to protest the planned LPFM. Reaction has been "overwhelming" so far. "Some of them wrote passionate letters of support, not only as advertisers but listeners," Kingston says. "We are more affordable and this could affect their advertising decision-making to advertise with us."

FM translators are considered a secondary service by the Commission so complaints of interference can be a death knell for the new signal if the Peter and John Radio Fellowship cannot find a new frequency to locate the translator. Yet the FCC may be reluctant to step in until the translator actually signs-on and WRNR-FM and its listeners can point to specific instances of interference.

In the Raleigh-Durham, NC market, suburban country "US 98.3" WLUS-FM is using a similar battle plan, urging fans to download and submit a "listener declaration form" that Lakes Media says it will file with the FCC to help force a

new translator off the air.

Arohi Media paid \$70,000 to buy the translator earlier this year and then proceeded to relocate it from Pocomoke City, MD into the Raleigh-Durham market. The now Durham-licensed translator W252DK at 98.3 FM signed on August 18 simulcasting south Asian WDUR (1490) and since then Lakes Media says it has make WLUS-FM “unlistenable” in Durham, Orange, northern Wake and southern Granville Counties where more than 6,000 listeners are potentially, impacted according to Nielsen estimates.

“We have received dozens of written complaints from listeners and we are forwarding all complaints to the FCC,” Lakes Media executive vice president Mark Reid says. “We expect that the FCC will require W252DK to discontinue the interference.”

Efforts to gain the support of listeners are a critical component to a station’s battle against interference Lakes Media president Tom Birch points out. “The only complaints that the FCC considers are those that come directly from listeners,” he says, adding, “The more Listener Declarations we are able to submit to the FCC, the faster they will act to shut down the illegal interference”.

Read a Society of Broadcast Engineer’s primer on FM translators [HERE](#).

